

# Action Alert

## The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress Should Enact Legislation to Eliminate Disparities in Veterans' Access to Chiropractic Care *DCs, State Associations Urged to Contact Their U.S. House Members*

### **STATUS OF CHIROPRACTIC IN THE DVA:**

Following decades of inaction and neglect on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), the process of integrating chiropractic care into the DVA health care delivery system was initiated during the past decade, but only after **Congress enacted a series of statutes (Including PL 107-135 and PL 108-170) that included specific directives instructing the DVA to hire doctors of chiropractic and place them at DVA health care facilities.** Prior to the intervention of Congress, no doctors of chiropractic served on the staff of any DVA treatment facility and the availability of the services delivered by doctors of chiropractic for eligible veterans was limited to DVA "referrals" to those doctors serving in private practice outside of the DVA system. Such referrals were so rarely provided, that as a practical matter, it would be fair to say that access to the services provided by doctors of chiropractic within the DVA system was virtually non-existent until Congress took action to address that glaring deficiency. As a result of the previous referenced congressional directives, including recommendations issued by a congressionally-mandated advisory committee, the DVA (as of August 2013) currently provides access to a Doctor of Chiropractic at 48 major DVA treatment facilities within the U.S.

### **A MAJOR DISPARITY CONTINUES TO EXIST – AND VETERANS SERVICE GROUPS SUPPORT CORRECTING THIS DEFICIENCY:**

Despite the above progress, the overwhelming majority of America's eligible veterans continue to be denied access to chiropractic care, because the DVA has failed to take any significant action to provide chiropractic care at over 100 additional major DVA treatment facilities that comprise the major sites where DVA care is offered. The DVA has no doctors of chiropractic on staff at these locations and referrals to doctors of chiropractic care outside of DVA's system are rarely provided at these and other location. Virtually all major VA service organizations have formally testified in support of enacting new legislation to correct this deficiency.

### **IMPORTANT GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM DATA:**

Shockingly, the above disparity has been allowed to continue, despite important data demonstrating a critical need within the DVA for the specific type of health care doctors of chiropractic specialize in providing. Recent Department of Veterans Affairs data (*Analysis of VA Health Care Utilization Among Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veterans*) cite "**diseases of Musculoskeletal System/Connective System,**" such as **back pain, as the number one ailment of Iraq/Afghanistan veterans accessing DVA treatment.**

### **ACTION NEEDED IN THE 113<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS:**

In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress Representative Mike Michaud (D-Maine) has introduced **HR 921** the substance of which is identical to previous legislation which passed in both the 110<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congress with overwhelming bi-partisan support. *The Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs has passed an omnibus veterans health bill that contains elements of HR 921 and grassroots action in the Senate is not needed at this time.*

## TALKING POINTS:

- **For too long, veterans have been denied access through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to the chiropractic care they want, need and deserve.**
- Following enactment of specific legislative directives by Congress in 2002 and 2003 (*Public Laws 107-135 and 108-170*), the DVA is beginning to make chiropractic available at selected DVA facilities around the country.
- Where implemented, the integration of doctors of chiropractic into the DVA has proved highly successful.
- Still, the chiropractic access is virtually non-existent at nearly 75% of DVA major medical facilities.
- *Every* eligible veteran should have unimpeded access through the DVA to services provided by doctors of chiropractic.
- Although this is a step forward to improve the care available to America's veterans, many are unable to access chiropractic care at a DVA facility unless the program is expanded.
- Musculoskeletal ailments (*principally joint and back disorders*) were the top health problem of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, according to a recent DVA report.
- More needs to be done to overcome barriers to chiropractic care and ensure that doctors of chiropractic are integrated fully in federal health programs - like the DVA health system - without any further delay.
- **House Members should co-sponsor HR 921.**

Current Cosponsors (these members do not need to be contacted):

Rep Bonamici, Suzanne [OR-1]  
Rep Clay, Wm. Lacy [MO-1]  
Rep Connolly, Gerald E. [VA-11]  
Rep Enyart, William L. [IL-12]  
Rep Frelinghuysen, Rodney P. [NJ-11]  
Rep Hastings, Alcee L. [FL-20]

Rep Kilmer, Derek [WA-6]  
Rep Loebbeck, David [IA-2]  
Rep Petri, Thomas E. [WI-6]  
Rep Rahall, Nick J., II [WV-3]  
Rep Schrader, Kurt [OR-5]

## What You Need to Do:

- **Contact your federal Representative using the [ACA Legislative Action Center](#) or the [ICA Adjust The Vote](#) site and urge them to cosponsor HR 921.**
- **House offices can also be reached via phone at 202-224-3121, where you can also urge them to cosponsor HR 921.**

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